CLAIMS

1/ A method of processing confidential codes in a system
having secure functions (180), the method comprising the
steps consisting in:

5   - receiving a code;
      - verifying a first entitlement for accessing a
first function (180), and as determined by a first code;
      - authorizing access to the first function (180) if
the first entitlement is recognized; and

10   - if the first entitlement is not recognized, using
the code to verify a second entitlement as determined by
a second code that is different from the first code, to
trigger at least one second function (170) without
revealing the fact that the code does not make it

15 possible to obtain the first entitlement;
      the method being characterized in that the step of
verifying the second entitlement comprises the operations
consisting in: obtaining a new code from the first code
by means of a second transformation (140) that is the

20 inverse of a first simple transformation that enables the
holder of the first code to obtain the second code from
the first code; and testing the new code by performing
again the step of verifying the first entitlement.

25 2/ A method according to claim 1, characterized by the
fact that said first simple transformation is performed
by a unit shift of one character of the first code.

3/ A method according to either preceding claim,
30 characterized by the fact that the steps consists in
verifying the first and second entitlements make use of
digitally-recorded user profile.

4/ A method according to any preceding claim,
35 characterized by the fact that the second function (170)
consists in displaying a message selected randomly from a
plurality of messages stating that access to the first

function (180) is not possible, without specifying that the code is not the right code for obtaining the first entitlement.

5   5/ A method according to any preceding claim, characterized by the fact that the first function (180) is a bank transaction.

6/ A method according to any preceding claim,
10   characterized by the fact that it further comprises a disabling step (200) if the step that consists in verifying whether the first entitlement has been tested more than a determined number of times without success.

15   7/ A method according to any preceding claim, characterized by the fact that the steps consisting in verifying the first and second entitlements make use of a microprocessor card (10).

20   8/ A method according to claim 7, characterized by the fact that the second simple transformation (140) is itself a function of parameters that are accessible on the microprocessor card (10).

25   9/ Apparatus for controlling access to secure functions (180) by means of a code, the apparatus comprising:
         - means for receiving a code;
         - means for using said code to verify a first entitlement for accessing a first function (180), and as
30   determined by a first code;
         - means for authorizing access to the first function (180) if the entitlement is recognized; and
         - if the first function (180) is refused, means for using the code to verify a second entitlement as
35   determined by a second code which is different from the first code in order to trigger at least one second

function (170) without revealing the fact that the code
does not enable the first entitlement to be obtained;
  the apparatus being characterized in that the means
for verifying the second entitlement perform operations
5   consisting in obtaining a new code from the first code by
means of a second transformation (140) that is the
inverse of a first simple transformation that enables the
holder of the first code to obtain the second code from
the first code, and executing again the step of verifying
10   the first entitlement in order to test the new code.

10/ Apparatus according to claim 9, characterized by the
fact that said first simple transformation is performed
by a unit shift of one character of the first code.

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11/ Apparatus according to claim 9 or 10, characterized
by the fact that it is used for making a banking
transaction secure.

20   12/ Apparatus according to any one of claims 9 to 11,
characterized by the fact that the second function (170)
is performed by means which display a message selected
randomly from a plurality of messages stating that access
to the first function (180) is not possible, but without
25   specifying that the code is not the right code for
obtaining the first entitlement.

13/ Apparatus according to any one of claims 9 to 12,
characterized in that it constitutes a bank card
30   terminal.

14/ Apparatus according to any one of claims 9 to 13,
characterized in that it further comprises disabling
means that are implemented if the first entitlement is
35   tested more than a determined number of times without
success.

15/. Apparatus according to any of claims 9 to 14, characterized by the fact that the means for verifying the first and second entitlements make use of a microprocessor card (10).

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16/ Apparatus according to claim 15, characterized by the fact that the second simple transformation (140) is itself a function of parameters accessible on the microprocessor card (10).